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FOR INFORMATION

STATEMENT OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION ON UNICEF TO THE 1994 ANNUAL SESSION OF THE UNICEF EXECUTIVE BOARD

1. Looking back on a year of considerable achievements for UNICEF and the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Committee on UNICEF must not stop us from recognizing the threat that the persistent recession represents for children and for our joint efforts on their behalf. It is a time now for greater realism and for imaginative, cost-effective ways to achieve our common goals, which are to ensure the survival, reinforce the protection and facilitate the continuing development of children.

2. NGOs and the NGO Committee on UNICEF are aware that only a close alliance of civic society with Governments and intergovernmental agencies can lead to the achievement of those goals. The pooling of human and material resources is vital to this endeavour and the Committee wishes to assure members of the Executive Board of its readiness to collaborate and cooperate in your national and collective efforts. In addition, the dramatic increase of problems faced by children in especially difficult circumstances and their all too many unattended needs cause us to appeal strongly to you for a more generous resource allocation for UNICEF programmes for children in especially difficult circumstances.

3. The Committee wishes to congratulate the UNICEF Executive Director, Mr. James P. Grant, for his plea to the fiftieth session of the Commission on Human Rights concerning the ban on the production, use, stockpile, sale and export of anti-personnel land-mines. It is a cause long espoused by NGOs anxious to abolish this wanton killer and maimer of non-belligerent bystanders, many of whom are children. Land-mines, however, are only a small part of countries' arsenals, and military expenses, as you know, often take up far too large a proportion of national budgets. If even a fraction of such expenses were directed to children and their basic needs, the conditions and prospects of whole populations would be healthier and happier ones.

4. Member organizations of the NGO Committee on UNICEF and the Committee itself are investing great efforts in the promotion and attainment of the goals of the World Summit for Children and the implementation of the

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Convention on the Rights of the Child. Among its more visible activities over the past few months, the Committee promoted the implementation of the Convention in Central America, Belize and Mexico through its conference in Antigua, Guatemala, in November 1993, which resulted in the establishment and/or strengthening of national NGO coalitions on child rights in the region. As part of its contribution to the International Year of the Family, the Committee produced a set of guidelines on the difficult issue of substitute families for children deprived of their natural families at the World NGO Forum held in Malta in late 1993 to launch the Year.

5. The Committee's working plan for the near future is focused mainly on maximum input into the three upcoming United Nations events: the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women. We are concerned that despite the efforts of UNICEF and of many NGOs, child-related issues have not been given adequate attention in the draft documents of, and the preparations for, these conferences. Among such issues, the girl child - one of our ongoing priorities -is of paramount importance, and we are, therefore, happy to note that there is a separate section on the girl child in chapter four of the International Conference on Population and Development's Platform of Action. We are concerned, however, not to have seen similar inclusions in the preparatory documents of the other two events. We also hope that these international forums will seriously address the situation of the most vulnerable children and help nations to move towards the attainment of the Summit goals and towards a world which mirrors the principles and provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

6. The NGO Committee will continue its outreach to NGOs worldwide and hopes to hold a conference or seminar in Asia, probably in 1996, as well as training courses and a consultation in Central and Eastern Europe, possibly in Albania.

7. Finally, the Committee wishes to congratulate UNICEF member States on their evident progress towards the attainment of the goals of the 1990 World Summit for Children. Please remember that NGOs are also important actors in this field. In many countries, your own local and national NGOs have been included in planning as well as implementation of your national programmes of actions. We would like to see this collaborative approach become the accepted pattern to ensure optimum achievement of our common goals and a happier state for the world's children next year and in the years ahead.